

We claim:

- 1     1.     A method comprising:  
2             providing an offer, via an interface at a vending machine, for a benefit in  
3     exchange for an email address;  
4             receiving, via the interface at the vending machine, an email address; and  
5             after receiving the email address, transmitting a promotional message to the  
6     received email address, in which the promotional message includes  
7             a code that is redeemable for a benefit at the vending machine.
- 1     2.     The method of claim 1, in which receiving, via an interface at a vending  
2     machine, an email address comprises:  
3             receiving a plurality of email addresses via the interface at the vending  
4     machine.
- 1     3.     The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2             validating the received email addresses.
- 1     4.     A method comprising:  
2             providing an offer, via an interface at a vending machine, for a benefit in  
3     exchange for an email address;  
4             receiving, via the interface at the vending machine, an email address; and  
5             after receiving the email address, transmitting a promotional message to the  
6     received email address, in which the promotional message includes  
7             a message promoting the vending machine.
- 1     5.     The method of claim 4, in which receiving, via an interface at a vending  
2     machine, an email address comprises:  
3             receiving a plurality of email addresses via the interface at the vending  
4     machine.

2     6.     The method of claim 4, further comprising:  
3             validating the received email addresses.

1     7.     A method comprising:  
2             receiving a set of email addresses;  
3             identifying at least one vending machine to be associated with the set of  
4     email addresses;  
5             determining at least one rule defining restrictions on when a message may  
6     be sent to at least one of the email addresses; and  
7             sending a message via email transmission to each of the set of email  
8     addresses in compliance with the restrictions on when a message may be sent,  
9             in which the message includes content that promotes the vending  
10    machine.

1     8.     The method of claim 7, in which sending a message via email transmission  
2     to each of the set of email addresses comprises:  
3             sending the message to a predetermined address;  
4             determining whether approval has been received; and  
5             sending a message via email transmission to each of the set of email  
6     addresses only if approval has been received.

1     9.     The method of claim 7, further comprising:  
2             receiving data representing a preference of a customer;  
3             determining an email address from the set of email addresses that  
4     corresponds to the customer;  
5             determining a second message according to the preference; and  
6             sending the second message via email transmission the email address that  
7     corresponds to the customer.

1     10.     The method of claim 7, further comprising:  
2             generating a promotion for the vending machine; and  
3             in which the step of sending a message comprises:  
4                 accessing a database of consumer preferences;  
5                 determining, from the database, a set of recipients that have  
6     preferences corresponding to the promotion; and  
7                 determining a respective email address for each of the set of  
8     recipients; and  
9                 sending a message via email transmission to each of the respective  
10    email addresses, in which the message indicates the promotion.

1     11.     The method of claim 10, in which generating a promotion for the vending  
2     machine comprises:  
3             generating a promotion for the vending machine based on at least one  
4     revenue management factor.